



TARSIPES RUSTRATES *Cervet Ferr.*

J. Gould and W. Leitch del. et lith.

Ballman del. & Walton sculp.

TARSIPES ROSTRATUS, *Gerv. et Verr.*

Long-nosed Tarsipes.

Tarsipes rostratus, Gerv. and Verr. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part X. p. 1.—Ib. in Guerin's Mag. de Zool., 1842,

Mamm., pls. 35, 36, 37.

——— *Spenseræ*, Gray in Ann. and Mag. of Nat. Hist., vol. ix. p. 40.—List of Mamm. in Brit. Mus. Coll., p. 87.

Jeë-pin, Aborigines around Perth.

Ngool-boon-goor, Aborigines of King George's Sound.

THIS highly curious little animal was first brought before the notice of the scientific world by M. Paul Gervais, who in his own name and that of M. Jules Verreaux read a lengthened memoir, illustrated by drawings, respecting its structure and affinities, at the scientific meeting of the Zoological Society of London, held on the 11th of January, 1842; immediately after which period specimens were sent to this country from King George's Sound by His Excellency Governor Grey; and Mr. J. E. Gray, conceiving the differences they exhibited from M. Gervais' animal to be of specific importance, applied to the animal in question the term *Spenseræ*, from the maiden name of His Excellency's amiable lady. As soon as I became aware of the existence of so interesting an animal in Western Australia, I wrote to Mr. Gilbert, and directed him to pay particular attention to the subject; and he has since transmitted to me several examples both from the neighbourhood of Swan River and from King George's Sound, a careful examination of which with those above-mentioned has fully satisfied me of their identity.

The following notes accompanied the specimens:—

“The Tarsipes is generally found in all situations suited to its existence from Swan River to King George's Sound, but from its rarity and the difficulty with which it is procured, notwithstanding the high rewards I offered, the natives only brought me four specimens; one of these, a female, I kept alive for several months, and it soon became so tame as to allow itself to be caressed in the hand without evincing any fear or making any attempt to escape. It is strictly nocturnal, sleeping during the greater part of the day and becoming exceedingly active at night: when intent upon catching flies it would sit quietly in one corner of its cage, eagerly watching their movements, as, attracted by the sugar, they flew around; and when a fly was fairly within its reach it bounded as quick as lightning and seized it with unerring aim, then retired to the bottom of the cage and devoured it at leisure, sitting tolerably erect and holding the fly between its fore-paws, and always rejecting the head, wings and legs. The artificial food given it was sopped bread made very sweet with sugar, into which it inserted its long tongue precisely in the way in which the Honey-eaters among birds do theirs into the flower-cups for honey; every morning the sop was completely honey-combed, as it were, from the moisture having been drained from it by the repeated insertion of the tongue; a little moistened sugar on the end of the finger would attract it from one part of the cage to the other; and by this means an opportunity may be readily obtained for observing the beautiful prehensile structure of the tongue, which I have frequently seen protruded for nearly an inch beyond the nose; the edges of the tongue near the tip are slightly serrated. The tail is prehensile, and is used when the animal is climbing precisely like that of the *Hepoona*. The eyes, although small, are exceedingly prominent and are placed very near each other; the ears are generally carried quite erect. When sleeping the animal rests upon the lower part of the back, with its long nose bent down between its fore-feet and its tail brought over all and turned down the back. Mr. Johnson Drummond shot a pair in the act of sucking the honey from the blossoms of the *Melaleuca*; he watched them closely, and distinctly saw them insert their long tongues into the flower precisely after the manner of the birds above-mentioned.”

The figures on the accompanying Plate are of the natural size, and being carefully coloured after nature, renders a minute description unnecessary. The sexes are similarly marked, and may be thus briefly described:—

All the upper surface grey with a dorsal stripe of black, on either side of which is a broader one of reddish brown. The under surface and feet are buffy white, the buff tints becoming of a deeper hue on the flanks, the forehead inclining to rufous, and the space round the eye buffy white.

The singular plant upon which the three figures are placed is a species of *Petrophila*, the specific name of which I am unacquainted with: like many others of the Western Australian plants, it is probably undescribed.